

New ELA course helps students enter credit-bearing college courses

Students who fare well in a new high school English course are guaranteed to enter credit-bearing English classes at Delaware colleges and universities.

The Foundations of College English course was developed through funding from Strada Education Network in partnership with the Delaware Department of Education and Delaware institutions of higher education (see below) to reduce college remediation rates. This course was designed to complement the Foundations of College Math course which was developed and launched in 2014.

Of all Delaware public high school graduates who enter an in-state college or university, 41 percent require remedial education courses in mathematics or English, according to the state's 2017 College Success Report. About 24 percent require remedial coursework in English. Students who do not score well on college placement tests may be forced to take remedial English courses prior to enrolling in credit bearing coursework. These non-credit, remedial courses often cost the same as credit-bearing classes but don't count toward a student's degree.

The Foundations of College English was piloted in fall 2016 across six high schools as part of the state-model Allied Health career & technical education program of study. Schools identify students for the foundations course based on their PSAT and SAT scores. And the Foundations of College English course was then offered to students as an elective course to ensure all students are able to pursue continuing education without the need for remediation.

Participating pilot schools include: Appoquinimink School District's Appoquinimink and Middletown High Schools; Indian River School District's Indian River and Sussex Central High Schools; Milford School District's Milford High School; and Smyrna School District's Smyrna High School. Any public high school can offer the class next year.

"Students graduate high school ready to start their college careers. Being forced to take non-credit courses delays their start to earn a degree while adding to their college debts," Governor John Carney said. "This collaboration between our public schools and Delaware's colleges and universities aims to help our youth complete postsecondary education on time and with less debt so they can begin their careers in Delaware's workforce."

Carney joined Secretary of Education Susan Bunting today at Milford High School, one of the pilot sites. They talked to educators and students about their experiences in the course.

"Earning a college degree is challenging enough without the extra barriers created by remedial coursework. We must prepare our graduates for the rigor of college coursework," Bunting said. "Offering the Foundations of College English is another way to support our students to ensure they not only enter college but also leave with valuable degrees."

A U.S. Department of Education study found that less than half of students in remedial courses actually complete them, and only 17 percent of remedial reading students and 27 percent of remedial math students completing their bachelor's degrees.

"Too many students today begin postsecondary education and never finish. We must find new ways to help students overcome obstacles, such as time spent in remedial courses, so they gain the necessary credentials to compete and succeed in a modern, global workforce," said Bill Hansen, president and CEO of Strada and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education. "I'm

encouraged to see the State of Delaware scale this innovative approach to ensure students have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in work and in life.”

The Foundations of College English course was designed by Delaware Technical Community College. A series of online modules also were created to supplement the course and/or to be embedded in other English language arts coursework for junior or senior high school students.

Students who earn a 75 percent or better in the Foundations of College English course are guaranteed entry into credit-bearing English language arts coursework at Goldey Beacom College, Delaware State University, Delaware Technical Community College, University of Delaware, Wesley College and Wilmington University.

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